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Friday, May 18, 2012

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□ Congresswoman Matsui Introduces Vegetation on Levees Legislation

Bill, cosponsored by 30 Members of the CA Delegation, would require regional variances to ensure flexibility of national policy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento), with the support of 30 Members of the California Delegation, introduced bi-partisan legislation, the Levee Vegetation Review Act, to require the Army Corps of Engineers to adopt a Regional Variance policy instead of the Corps' current all-encompassing national policy for vegetation on levees.

Congresswoman Matsui commented, "Our number one concern should be public safety. Unfortunately, the Corps' current one-size-fits-all national vegetation policy will have a negative impact on public safety, on the environment, and on the cost of our levee projects." Matsui added, "If there's one thing members of Congress from both sides of the aisle can agree on, it's that the different areas of our country have different needs. It's time for the Corps to put in place policy that shows they understand this too."

"Congresswoman Matsui's bill will help the Corps avoid needless litigation and wasted time, effort, and money clear cutting vegetation without adequate justification," added Congressman John Garamendi. "The legislation also gives us the ability to use the best available science and adapt levee policy towards the needs of local communities."

Recently, the Army Corps released a Policy Guidance Letter for regional variance. However, it still did not take into account the concerns that have been voiced by the State of California and a wide range of stakeholders, nor did it provide enough flexibility to provide for the unique challenges of different regions across the nation, and particularly in California and communities like the Sacramento Region. The legislation introduced today would address that. Instead of a

one-size fits all national standard, the bill would require the Corps to move to regional variances with input from the state and local entities that are most familiar with the unique challenges facing each community. Among other things, as part of its regional variance policy, the bill provides the Corps with the flexibility to exempt areas from the policy, where deemed necessary from the Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Congresswoman Matsui has been the leading voice in opposition to the blanket policy prohibiting vegetation on levees for years. In April of this year, Congresswoman Matsui, with the backing of the entire California Democratic Congressional Delegation, [sent a letter](#) to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy, that demanded changes in levee vegetation variance policy, in response to the Corps' public comment period for their Policy Guidance Letter on Variance from Vegetation Standards for Levees and Floodwalls.

In February 2011, Matsui had also [sent a letter](#) to the Secretary Darcy urging the Corps to change their policy regarding vegetation on levees, highlighting that even the variance process is cost-prohibitive for the majority of state and local agencies. Matsui also sent a [letter in December 2010](#), which requested that the Corps reconsider their levee vegetation policy for both economic and environmental reasons.

Last fall, Congresswoman Matsui took ASA Darcy on a tour of Sacramento's levees and showed her first-hand the unique challenges Sacramento faces with regard to the levee vegetation policy. Congresswoman Matsui has pledged her commitment to continue to urge the Corps to restore balance to decisions involving levees and vegetation, and end the uncertainty that has plagued state and local flood protection agencies over the last year.

Original co-sponsors (30) of the bill are Representatives: Doris Matsui (CA-05), George Miller (CA-07), Grace Napolitano (CA-38), John Garamendi (CA-10), Dan Lungren (CA-03), Gary Miller (CA-42), Ken Calvert (CA-44), Zoe Lofgren (CA-16), Jackie Speier (CA-12), Lois Capps (CA-23), Mike Thompson (CA-01), Henry Waxman (CA-30), Mike Honda (CA-15), Anna Eshoo (CA-14), Janice Hahn (CA-36), Judy Chu (CA-32), Lynn Woolsey (CA-06), Jerry McNerney (CA-11), Joe Baca (CA-43), Linda Sanchez (CA-39), Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34), Dennis Cardoza (CA-18), Jim Costa (CA-20), Barbara Lee (CA-09), Howard Berman (CA-28), Sam Farr (CA-17), Adam Schiff (CA-29), Karen Bass (CA-33), Pete Stark (CA-13), Susan Davis (CA-53)

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